

## Town of Windsor Housing Element Update

### Stakeholder Meeting Summary

On June 19, 2014, the Town of Windsor held a Housing Element Stakeholder Meeting from 3:00pm to 5:00pm at Town Hall. At the meeting housing stakeholders heard a presentation about the Town's Housing Element Update and discussed housing challenges in Windsor. The following summarizes key housing-related topics discussed during the meeting. Following this summary is a comment letter submitted at the meeting by the Sonoma County Housing Advocacy Group.

- Windsor eliminated 68 units of affordable housing from the Bell Village project for unclear reasons. The units would have helped house displaced mobile home residents, but there wasn't any debate or effort to replace the units elsewhere. A lot of people pushed for the affordable units as part of the original project to accommodate displaced mobile home residents and meet other affordable housing needs.
- The Town shouldn't count second units as affordable unless there is an affordability covenant included with the unit. The homeowner could build or use the unit as a vacation rental or home addition.
- The planned railroad station Downtown should be evaluated in the Housing Element. There is an adopted Station Area Plan that provides for higher density development in Windsor. SMART indicated that 20 percent of units near the Santa Rosa station should be affordable. However, in Windsor the Station Area Plan doesn't include any affordability requirements. In order for the station area to be successful, it needs to be planned for people of all income levels. The Town should strive to ensure that 20 percent of the units in the station area are affordable. There is also potential for the train to cause the station area to gentrify. The Town needs to plan ahead to ensure long-term affordable housing is available in areas around the station.
- The Town needs to look for ways to raise money for affordable housing. Typically jurisdictions need to provide 10 percent of the funding necessary to build affordable housing. Just because there isn't redevelopment anymore doesn't mean there isn't funding available. Windsor needs to provide funding beyond what is made available through redevelopment boomerang funds. The Town still receives property taxes. The County and some other cities in Sonoma County have continued to provide 10 percent of the funding needed to support construction of affordable housing. Windsor should do the same.
- There is money coming from the State to help provide affordable housing. The new State budget has several billion dollars going toward affordable housing in transit oriented developments, as well as funding for special needs housing. The Town could take initiative to pursue this money. For example, Santa Rosa created a housing trust fund, which has enabled the City to apply for match funding and other grants. The Town should also work collaboratively with developers or statewide groups to pursue projects, funding, and initiatives for housing (e.g., California Community Economic Development Association). The Town should allocate staff and resources to pursue partnerships and funding.

- The Housing Element responds to ABAG identified housing needs, but there are 3,500 extremely low income and homeless people countywide that needs housing and support services. Windsor needs to provide some of this housing. There aren't many food centers or homeless shelters in Windsor. That's why the homeless population is not as high as other areas of the county. Most of the homeless population in the county is represented by local residents and a high percentage have mental disabilities. There is an extremely high waiting list for homeless shelters in the county. Windsor should have permanent supportive housing and homeless resources. Emergency housing is also needed along with programs to help people get back on their feet. The Food Pantry is good, but more is needed. The Town should partner with churches to meet the needs of the homeless (e.g., Our lady of Guadalupe). The Town could also pursue innovative housing opportunities, such as co-housing arrangements.
- Windsor needs to provide workforce housing. If those serving the community (e.g., teachers, police officers, fire fighters) don't have a place to live they will leave the community. The new hospital will create new jobs, but there isn't housing affordable to most people who work at the hospital (e.g., nurses, technicians). The Town should partner with organizations, such as the Sonoma County Housing Trust and developers to build workforce housing. The Town could use inclusionary requirements to ensure funding or land is dedicated on which to build workforce housing.
- Windsor's housing issues are similar to other communities in the county. Growth ordinances are in place in Windsor and they have strong support from the community. The growth ordinance affects the affordability of housing. It seems like every community has a way to skirt the regulations that are somewhat unenforceable. For fair housing, cities can be liable when zoning practices cause roadblocks to affordable housing. There have been other cities sued in Sonoma County. Town staff probably have a better idea of the constraints or barriers to affordable housing development. The Town needs to be proactive in identifying sites that are buildable, removing barriers and impediments to housing, and making it possible to build affordable housing. The Housing Element process should consult developers who are working in Windsor to understand their experience and where improvements are needed to facilitate the development of housing.
- Windsor has done a good job of providing affordable housing throughout the community, but future projects should include affordable units mixed in with market rate units. For inclusionary housing programs, payment of in lieu fees is a problem that either results in housing not being built or crating isolated affordable housing projects. Senior projects are an example of an isolated project type that can become ghettoized because it is kept separate from other neighborhoods. All affordable units need to be integrated in the community to avoid concentrations of low-income housing, and affordable and market rate units should be built simultaneously to ensure the affordable units are constructed and to address potential NIMBY issues. Affordable units should be designed and constructed in the same manner as market rate units so there isn't a stigma associated with affordable, low-income housing units or those who live in affordable units.

# Sonoma County Housing Advocacy Group



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To: Town of Windsor  
Re: Housing Element Update

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The Sonoma County Housing Advocacy Group has been advocating for affordable housing and housing for persons with special needs for more than fifteen years. We have worked with officials from all jurisdictions in Sonoma County to encourage greater housing choices for lower income households.

Areas in and near the Town of Windsor are currently undergoing major commercial and residential expansion. The expansion of the Sonoma County Airport is creating thousands of new jobs, and other development which has been proposed in the Town will create hundreds of additional service-related jobs. All these new jobs will impact existing housing - causing rents and home prices to rise and forcing lower income families to 'double up' or move.

The Town's new Housing Element must provide adequate sites for housing so that persons working in these new jobs have the opportunity to live in Windsor rather than miles away. The RHNA numbers which ABAG has issued for the 2014-2022 Planning Period provide that Windsor must accommodate 120 units of new housing development affordable to very low income households; 65 units affordable to low income households; 67 units for moderate income and 188 units affordable to above moderate income households. These numbers were based on flawed methodology which, according to HCD, seriously underestimated need for jurisdictions which did not include "Planned Development Areas." The ABAG methodology was also found by HUD to be discriminatory and unlawful under the Fair Housing Act because it improperly over-allocated lower income units to areas with already high concentrations of lower income housing like Oakland, San Jose and Richmond, while reducing allocations of multi-family units to areas in Sonoma, Napa and Marin which have low concentrations of lower income housing compared to other areas in ABAG. Copies of these findings by HCD and HUD are available online, or can be provided to your staff on request.

In addition, the ABAG numbers for Windsor housing needs were determined several years ago and fail to adequately consider the housing impacts of the new commercial development planned for Windsor and the airport area. The new numbers are substantially lower than the Town's current RHNA numbers, but very little affordable housing has been built in the Town during the current 2007-2014 Planning Period. The Town has not prepared the Annual Housing Element Progress Report for the 2007-2014 planning period as required by Government Code §65400(b)(2), but we understand from staff that almost no affordable units have been built during this period, and the families needing those units continue to do without.

So in addition to meeting the jurisdictions new RHNA, and addressing the additional housing needs created by the huge expansion of commercial development in the area, the Town needs to address some or all of its unmet need for affordable housing for the *current* planning period.

The Town is required by state law to include *programs* in its new Housing Element to encourage and facilitate affordable housing development. One way it can do so is by adopting a “density bonus” ordinance fully consistent with Government Code §65915 which provides incentives, including increased density, to residential developers to include affordable units in their market rate developments. The ordinance adopted by the Town of Windsor (Code §27.22.010 *et seq.*) is inconsistent with the state law in key respects. For example, it requires a developer to apply for and receive a conditional use permit from the Planning Commission. See §27.22.060. Developments seeking a density bonus or concessions/incentives must be “compatible with the purpose and intent of the General Plan and this Zoning Ordinance.” *Id.* A program should be included in the new Housing Element to make the Town’s Density Bonus Ordinance fully consistent with §65915.

A second way would be for the Town to beef up its inclusionary zoning ordinance. That ordinance allows developers the option to pay a modest “in lieu” fee rather than include affordable units in their market rate developments. The ordinance needs to be revised to *require* inclusion of affordable units in all new “for sale” residential construction, and to raise the *in lieu* fee to provide adequate funding to built affordable units off site if the project is a rental housing project and the developer declines to build the affordable units on site.

Third, the Town needs to impose a fee on commercial development to help mitigate impacts of the development on housing rents and prices.

Fourth, the Town could and should direct a substantial portion of the redevelopment “boomerang” funding and “tax increment funding” which it receives to affordable housing construction.

The Town has several large mobile home parks. This is an important source of affordable housing - especially for seniors. The Town should adopt an ordinance incorporating SB510 (2013) into its mobile home ordinances. This important new state law says cities should take into consideration the views of residents of any mobile home park where the park owner seeks to convert the park to “condominium ownership.”

There and other programs will help encourage development of new affordable housing in Windsor and help address the Town’s chronic lack of affordable units. The Housing Advocacy Group would be more than willing to consult with or assist your staff in this effort.